

Original Article

## Concept analysis of emotional intelligence in nursing

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### ABSTRACT

**Background & Aim:** Emotional intelligence is one of the most important issues that has strong effects on patient nursing care. Currently, a concept analysis approach is considered as one of the most important approaches for nursing knowledge development. Therefore, this narrative study is done by content analysis approach to understand and use emotional intelligence in nursing.

**Methods & Materials:** In this study, Walker and Avant approach was used for the emotional intelligence concept analysis. Using keywords “emotional intelligence and nursing,” 43 related articles published before 2013 in databases including Sid, Iran Medex, PubMed, PsycInfo, and Medline were extracted. Emotional intelligence various definitions, applications, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents were determined.

**Results:** Four defining attributes of emotional intelligence in different definitions are self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and management of the social relationship. The emotional intelligence is defined as follows: “The nurse’s constructive ability to demonstrate and facilitate self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social relationship management.”

**Conclusion:** Literature suggests that the emotional intelligence concept has been developing over the past 20 years. Conducting further researches aimed at increasing emotional intelligence in nursing work is recommended.

### Introduction

Emotional intelligence is emerging as a powerful concept, and a wide range of professional fields study the impact of the emotional intelligence on individual aspects (life satisfaction, self-esteem, stress reduction, problem-solving, self-concept, mental health, independence, flexibility, control of stimulants, reduction of depression and anger, increase of motivation), and social aspects (interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, organizational commitment, and promoting empathy) (1-9). Emotional intelligence has prevented deviant behaviors such as addiction to drugs and alcohol. Besides,

it has been described as a predictor of future educational and professional success (10). Emotional intelligence is one of the most important skills of health-care professionals (11). Nurses, in various fields such as management, education and research study different aspects of emotional intelligence (9, 10). Before 2000, the name of emotional intelligence had not been mentioned in any of nursing fields. Emotional intelligence entered in the field of nursing in 2000. Emotional intelligence includes a set of emotional actions that influence the improvement of; clinical competency, educational attainment, compliance with discipline, professional performance, saving work power and patient satisfaction with nursing care (12). However, most experts describe emotional intelligence as a “vague notion” which is as a “characteristic of a good nurse” (11). This ambiguity exists as there are various definitions of emotional intelligence which have

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been developed in recent decades, and the concept which is quite new (12, 13). Using emotional intelligence in the nursing profession depends on a good and clear understanding of this concept which could benefit nurses and patients in different fields including; education, research, and practice (6, 7, 12-21). Therefore, the aim of this study was to analyze the concept of emotional intelligence in nursing to clarify and reduce ambiguity of its definition and apply it in the nursing practice.

### **Concept analysis**

The concept analysis is one of the strategies in concept development. In this study, Walker and Avant approach (2005) has been used to analyze the concept of emotional intelligence. This approach has eight steps. The first step in the process of Walker and Avant's approach, needs to determine an appropriate concept. The next step is to determine analytical purposes and aims of analysis. The aim of this analysis is to examine the internal structures of the concept to increase its exploratory power. The next step is the identification of all uses of the concept which would be determined by reviewing the past researches and encyclopedias. The defining attributes of a concept which separate the concept from others and provide the widest vision of the concept would be determined next. The next step is the identification of the model, borderline and negative case, to show the use of emotional intelligence in nursing. The model case is an example of a concept that encompasses all the defining attributes of the concept. The borderline case is an example of a concept in which includes some of the concept defining attributes. A negative case is an example of a situation that is not like the concept, and by eliminating it, information about the defining attributes of the concept, can be obtained. The sixth step is the identification of antecedents which is achieved by broad review of the related literature. In the seventh step, the results or consequences are identified. In the eighth step, by determining the empirical referents, defining attributes of the concept in the real world are explored (22).

### **Methods**

In this study, using the key words "emotional intelligence and nursing," published articles in Eng-

lish and Persian by 2013 in Iranmedex, Sid, PubMed, PsycInfo, and Medline databases, were extracted. 67 full-text articles in English and Persian with emotional intelligence and nursing in title were considered. 10 duplicates were eliminated. 57 studies were reviewed. 14 studies that were irrelevant were excluded. Eventually, 43 studies were considered in the analysis of the concept.

1. Selecting the concept: Emotional intelligence is a vague concept that becomes increasingly important in nursing research. The concept of emotional intelligence is derived from clinical phenomena. Analysis of the concept helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice (23).

2. Determination of the purpose of the analysis: The purpose of this study is to determine defining attributes of emotional intelligence for application in nursing.

3. Identifying the uses of emotional intelligence in nursing.

### **Results**

The concept of emotional intelligence began by Thorndike (1920) who formulated early theories by defining social intelligence. Wechsler and Gardner developed social intelligence further (24-26). Studies have addressed the various aspects of emotional intelligence (26-29). The most important common definitions of emotional intelligence are as follows:

1. Mayer and Salovey ability model: ability to assess, express and manage own emotions and others to guide thought and action (16, 19, 21, 30-35)

2. Bar-on personality trait or emotional quotient: a mix of emotions and personality trait (10, 13, 18)

3. Goleman mixed model: a combination of emotional abilities of the first model and personality traits of the second model (12).

Emotional intelligence the most important definitions are summarized in table 1.

Four domains of emotional intelligence are defined in table 2.

Considering above factors, emotional intelligence in nursing can be defined as follows: the nurse's constructive ability to demonstrate and facilitate self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social relationship management.

**Table 1.** Definitions of emotional intelligence

Definition	Source
Ability to evaluate and express own and others' feelings	Montes-Berges, Augusto (2007) (38)
Self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy	Beauvais et al. (2011) (39)
Combination of emotions and personality attributes	Suliman (2010)
Proportion and emotional depth	Görgens-Ekermans and Brand (2012) (40)
Ability to use emotions.	Benson et al. (2010) (41)

4. Determination of the defining attributes of the concept: the defining attributes of the concept of emotional intelligence in nursing include:

a. Emotional intelligence as the individual trait: individual perceptions are related to a person's emotions

b. Emotional intelligence as the ability: the ability to understand, express and control emotions of own-self and others. The dimensions of emotional intelligence concept are shown in table 3.

**Table 2.** Domains of emotional intelligence

Emotional domain	intelligence Definition
Self-awareness	A deep understanding of own emotions
Self-management	The ability to use emotions in order to achieve goals
Social -awareness	A clear understanding of others' feelings
Social relationship management	The ability of establishing relationships with other

4. Identification of model: to illustrate the application of emotional intelligence in nursing, three samples of model, borderline and negative case, are being presented.

Model example: The nurse understands that the patient is concerned, and sits slowly next to the patient and with calm and appropriate words and body language talks to the patient, and realizes patient needs help from a social worker regarding finance.

Borderline example: The nurse understands that the patient is concerned, although the nurse knows talking to the patient makes him/her calmer and more comfortable, decides to leave the patient alone and presumes that doctor will deliver necessary intervention the next day.

Negative case example: Patient tells the nurse that, she/he has received alarming news from the doctor. The nurse, regardless of patient's condition, disappoints her/him about the medical treatment.

5. Identification of references: locus of control and boundaries is specified

Locus of control is a personality variable that is described by people who believe, amplifiers depend on their own behaviors. These people work better.

Person's borders: A person, who has sensitive borders, has higher emotional intelligence (11-40) and communicates well with others' feelings (40).

6. Identification of the consequences: the consequences of emotional intelligence are a very wide (41). In figure 1, references and consequences of the emotional intelligence concept in nursing can be seen

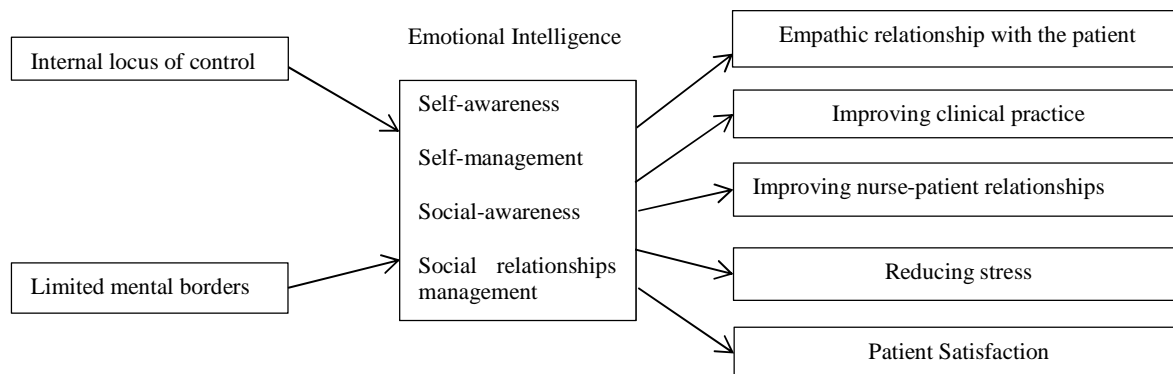
Determination of empirical references: experimental references includes; listening, developing empathic relationship and showing appropriate emotion to the patient.

### Discussion

In this study, the concept of emotional intelligence in nursing is defined as follows: the nurse's constructive ability to demonstrate and facilitate self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social relationship management. This comprehensive definition shows the explicit and implicit applications of emotional intelligence in nursing. The three important definitions of emotional intelligence are Mayer and Salovey (1997), Bar-on (1997) and Goleman (1999). Mayer and Salovey describe emotional intelligence as the ability to evaluate and control own and others' emotions, Bar-on describes it as personality attributes, and Goleman describes emotional intelligence as a combination of both models (12, 18, 23).

**Table 3.** Dimensions of emotional intelligence concept

The most important measurement scale	Measurement	Dimension of emotional intelligence concept
Bar-on (1997), emotional intelligence questionnaire	Self-report	Emotional intelligence attribute
Mayer and Salovey, and Caruso (2004), emotional intelligence test	Maximum performance test	Ability of emotional intelligence



**Figure 1.** Consequences of the emotional intelligence concept in nursing

Goleman’s model is used more frequently because of its clarity but has not been approved scientifically. The border between personal abilities and personality attributes is not clear in Goleman’s model (10).

The ability of emotional intelligence model has been approved scientifically, and emotional intelligence test of Mayer and Salovey, and Caruso has more construct validity, but its definition is not clear (27, 32, 39). Definition of emotional intelligence in this article is similar to Goleman (1999) simple definition. But it must be noted that, this definition does not invalidate Mayer and Salovey (1997) model, which has greater validity. Therefore, this is a practical definition which could be equally important for clinical nurses, educators and researchers.

Using this definition and other findings of this study, researchers can develop simple tools which, in addition to being simple, have greater validity. This study also has limitations. Some of the articles related to the topic of emotional intelligence in nursing, due to the absence of key words in the title, could not be included in the study. Therefore, it is recommended that further research to be conducted more comprehensively and with consideration of other relevant databases.

In this study, the definition of emotional intelligence in nursing was provided that could affect the future work of the profession. Therefore, more attention must be paid to emotional intelligence in different areas of nursing. More information about the emotional intelligence prologs could lead to a broader vision of nurses in how to use the emotional intelligence. The empirical evidence related to emotional intelligence can be used to design evidence-

based interventions to enhance emotional intelligence in the workforce.

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#### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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